

MEDIA ADVISORY

March 4, 2005

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Access to Justice Commission established to address legal needs of D.C. poor

-- Commission members to be sworn in on Monday at noon --

The D.C. Court of Appeals has established an Access to Justice Commission to address the increasing unmet legal needs of D.C. residents. An in-depth D.C. Bar Foundation review found that only one in 10 of the 110,000 District residents living in poverty actually get legal representation when needed.

According to the report, low-income African Americans and Latino and Asian Pacific American immigrant communities were found to be especially hard hit by the lack of legal representation. The report called for a "bold" approach and stressed the need for structural changes.

A recent study by the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute says that the District has one of the largest economic gaps in the Nation. It says the average income of the top fifth of the population is \$186,000 and the average income of the bottom fifth is \$6,000.

The Commission was established after detailed discussions led by the Court of Appeals with the District of Columbia Bar, the District of Columbia Bar Foundation and the District of Columbia Consortium of Legal Service Providers.

WHAT: **Installation Ceremony** for Access to Justice Commission members by D.C. Court of Appeals Chief Judge Annice Wagner, followed by a **Press Availability** with Commission Members

WHERE: **Moultrie Courthouse, Room 3300 (3rd floor)**, 500 Indiana Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C.

WHEN: **Monday, March 7, 2005 at noon.**

WHO: **Chief Judge Annice M. Wagner, D.C. Court of Appeals**
Peter Edelman, Chair, D.C. Access to Justice Commission
Newly-named Commission members
Others in attendance include:

John C. Keeney, Jr., President, D.C. Bar
John Cruden., President-Elect, D.C. Bar
Katherine Mazzaferri, Executive Director, D.C. Bar
Emily Spitzer, Executive Director, D.C. Bar Foundation
Maureen Thornton Syracuse, Pro Bono Program Director, D.C. Bar
R. Bruce McLean, Chair, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP
Roger E. Warin, Chair, Steptoe & Johnson, LLP

*To bring a still or television camera into the courthouse for this event, contact Leah Gurowitz in advance at 202-879-1700

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